

# Monthly Bulletin

OF

## The English League for the Taxation of Land Values

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1938.

A Happy New Year to all the Members and Friends to whom this copy of the *Bulletin* will be sent.

The past year has offered the League some special opportunities for effective propaganda. In March was held the triennial election of the London County Council. The outgoing Council had deeply pledged itself in support of the Rating of Land Values and had done the cause a great service by the publication and wide circulation of a fine Report of its Finance Committee on the subject. In November, in addition to the usual Annual elections in the provincial Boroughs, the triennial elections in the Metropolitan Boroughs took place. In all these contests, the League and its literature played an active part.

At the end of November, a Bill for Land Value Rating secured a good debate in the House of Commons. It was introduced by Mr. Andrew MacLaren and "backed" by four other members of the League. A special "whip" issued by the League, with notes for speakers and other information likely to be useful in debate, helped to secure a good attendance of members.

The New Year will bring its own opportunities for useful work. In spite of the diversion of public attention by foreign affairs, it is essential that the claims of the fundamental reform, which is the key to the solution of our many economic and social evils, and to our international troubles, should be kept well before the public. The activities of the League will be limited only by its available funds.

Will not those who "seeing the vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment"—those to whom Henry George dedicated his "Progress and Poverty" in 1879—help to bring about Happier New Years in the future by providing the League with increased resources for future efforts? All such New Year's Gifts will be gratefully received and carefully used.

### Foreign Affairs.

"There are two courses . . . by which the League [of Nations] can be revived and started again on a career of great and increasing usefulness. One is by working out practical proposals for removing the *main causes* of international conflict, *economic* as well as political, if indeed it is possible to separate the two. The other is to induce as many countries as possible to co-operate in his work . . . . *Economic distresses are among the most powerful factors responsible for the existing tension in international politics.*"—*Times*, December 13th. The italics are ours.

### Tariff Reform.

Some years ago, Alderman J. R. Firth, formerly Mayor of Strathfield, Sydney, New South Wales, when on a visit to this country, told us that on the question of "Protection" "the great majority of Australians are virtually insane." They hold the absurd belief that Tariffs, to prevent wealth from coming into the Dominion, are the cure for economic depression. The most economically backward part of Australia is the Northern Territory. A commission, appointed to enquire into the condition of the Territory with a view to a plan for its development, has just put in the forefront of its report a recommendation for "the abolition for 20 years of the Territory's income-tax on companies and individuals; the abolition of the petrol tax, now ranging from 2/9 to 4/4 a gallon; the suspension for 20 years of all tariffs in the Territory; the proclamation of Darwin as a free port for all goods used in the Territory." (*Times*, Dec. 9th, 1937). But, if this measure of abolition of taxation upon production and exchange is a good thing for the Northern Territory, why limit it to the Northern Territory and its operation to twenty years? If it be replied that the Territory is a backward area, and needs this help, what else is the island-continent as a whole, with its hugh undeveloped interior?

### For the attention of the Labour Party.

The question of compensation to landlords—to which the English League has always been opposed—has recently come to the fore again. The Tory Government has decided to buy out the owners of

mining royalties. The Official Opposition (the Labour Party) has published its Short Programme, which includes the buying out of agricultural landlords. On this question of practical politics, a valued Californian correspondent sends us a very apposite quotation from an English legal authority. He writes:—"Recently I read an oration on the Land Question by Sir John Duke, Lord Coleridge, who in the seventies became Lord Chief Justice of England. It was delivered to the Glasgow Juridical Society in the Queen's Rooms, May 25th, 1887. Parts of it read:—"It seems an elementary proposition that a free people can deal as it thinks fit with its Common Stock, and can prescribe to its citizens rules for its enjoyment, alienation and transmission . . . . There are estates in these Islands of more than a million acres . . . . I should myself deny that the mineral treasures under the soil of a country belong to a handful of surface proprietors in the sense in which this gentleman appeared to think they did . . . . The custom of bounding as to tin in Cornwall, the customs of the High Peak in Derbyshire as to lead, the legal rule everywhere as to gold and silver are enough to show that in these matters the general advantage was in former days openly and avowedly regarded, and that, when rights of private property interfered with it, they were summarily set at naught.

"But then it is said you have no right to do it, except on proper compensation. I ask respectfully, what is the exact meaning of these words, especially 'right' and 'proper?' Is the absolute 'right'—'right,' I say, not power, for that no man questions—is the absolute right of the State intended to be denied to deal with the common stock, with or without compensation? . . . . All laws of property must stand upon the foot of general advantage: a country belongs to the inhabitants'."

#### "Controlled" House-rents.

Commenting on the discussion on "Rent Restriction" in the House of Commons, just before Christmas, the editor of the *News-Chronicle* writes:—

"Clearly, the removal of control must be a gradual process. If all houses were decontrolled at once, there would be a rise in rents for nearly half the population. Decontrol must wait until there is such a supply of decent houses for the wage-earners of the country that it can be effected without raising rents."

The fears of the *News-Chronicle* would certainly be justified if attempts are continued, under the present rating system, to regulate house-rents by law for "nearly half the population." The rating of land values would promote fair rents for all, (1) by squeezing the monopoly value out of the prices of all

land, including the land needed for sites of houses and for the extraction of building materials, and (2) by transferring the burden of the rates from the occupiers of houses to the owners of the publicly-created land values.

#### Land, Buildings and Taxation.

A freehold of 10,500 square feet in Praed Street, Paddington, has been bought, with the help of Mr. (now Sir) E. W. Meyerstein, for the extension of St. Mary's Hospital, for £32,576. If the reported figures are correct this is at the rate of over £135,000 per acre.

The Rt. Hon. the Viscount Greenwood (better remembered as Mr. Hamar Greenwood), Chairman of the Aerated Bread Company, addressing the annual meeting of the company last month, mentioned, among "the principal reasons for the reduction of the Company's profits during the past year, the ever-increasing burden of the rates"—"nearly £11,000 more than they were two years ago." "The amount set aside for taxation, including National Defence Contribution, is £42,000." A letter to Viscount Greenwood, calling attention to the League's proposals for a just system of taxation, has, so far, elicited no response.

As regards the National Defence Contribution, it may be pointed out that, while enemy airplanes may destroy the Company's tea shops, which neither the Government nor the Insurance Companies seem willing to insure against war-risks, no amount of bombing can destroy the land on which they are built. There is no necessity to insure land values: the land is indestructible.

#### Mid-Bucks.

Mr. T. Atholl Robertson, F.R.G.S., F.S.A. (Scot.) has been a convinced and active Georgist for many years. He was formerly M.P. for Finchley, was President of the League in 1923-4, and is now one of its Vice-Presidents. Last month, at a well-attended and enthusiastic meeting at Aylesbury, he was adopted as prospective Liberal candidate for Mid-Bucks. Mr. Rupert East, his present successor in the presidency of the League, was present at the meeting, which unanimously approved Mr. Robertson's proposals for the Taxation and Rating of Land Values.

#### Meetings in January.

Tues. 11th—Edmonton Labour Party (Women's Section), 372, Fore Street: Fredk. Verinder, "Who ought to pay the Rates?" 2.30 p.m.

Thurs. 20th—London Co-operative Society, Hornsey Political Council, St. Mary's Parish Hall, High Street, Hornsey: Fredk. Verinder. 8 p.m.